

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and Civil Society Forum sets regional priorities and builds capacities to engage in development processes

3-5 April 2016, Bangkok, Thailand



The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convened the third session of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD 2016) at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok. APFSD 2016 met on the theme 'Regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific'. The first regional forum on sustainable development to take place following the

adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015, it shaped the regional response to the 2030 Agenda. The Forum engaged member States, United Nations institutions and other institutions, major groups, and other stakeholders on regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, reflecting ESCAP's mandate for follow-up and review. It also made recommendations on scientific and technological innovation for sustainable development and on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

As requested by the second session of the Forum, the third session discussed a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. The Forum also agreed on its form, function, and modalities after 2016. The conclusions and recommendations of the Forum helped to strengthen national governments implementation efforts and will also inform the global debate at the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), which will be convened in New York during July 2016.

APFSD 2016 was preceded by two preparatory events –

1. A meeting of Senior Officials that considered the draft of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 2 April 2016, and proposals for the form, function and modalities of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
2. The [Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development](#) (APCSF) was held from 31 March to 2 April 2015 in Bangkok as a preparatory event for the APFSD.



The Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 aimed to build the capacity of civil society participants to engage in sustainable development processes at the global and regional levels and agree on follow up to civil society positions adopted.

The Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 was convened by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) as a preparatory event for the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD 2016). It aimed to –

- Inform and build the capacity of civil society participants to engage in sustainable development processes at the global and regional levels.
- Agree on joint actions and follow up to civil society positions adopted.
- Provide a space for civil society to dialogue on, and prepare strategies for engaging in the APFSD and upcoming regional events and influence decision-making process
- Strengthen the outreach and effectiveness of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanisms (APRCM)

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Conclusions and recommendations of the Forum helped to strengthen national governments implementation efforts of Education 2030 and will also inform the global debate at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The APRCEM is "...a civil society platform aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Asia Pacific are heard in intergovernmental processes in regional and global level. The platform is initiated, owned and driven by the CSOs, and has been set up under the auspices of UN-ESCAP and seeks to engage with UN agencies and Member States on the Post-2015 as well as other development related issues/processes. As an open, inclusive, and flexible mechanism, RCEM is designed to reach the broadest number of CSOs in the region, harness the voice of grassroots and peoples' movements to advance development

justice that address the inequalities of wealth, power, resources between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women."

The APRCEM, constructed along the formats of the 'Major Groups and Stakeholders', is the formal regional Asia Pacific mechanism for civil society participation in the official SDG follow up processes. It is organised in 17 constituency groups and 5 sub-regions: South Asia, South East Asia, North East Asia, Central Asia and the Pacific. ASPBAE became a member of the APRCEM in March 2016.

The civil society forum expressed concern about the dominant macroeconomic policy regime in the region that has resulted in increased privatisation, liberalisation, and deregulation of economic activities and essential services. It also noted the shrinking civil society space that limits peoples' participation in socio-economic and environmental policy-making which remains largely under the control of a few rich countries and the powerful elite within the developing countries.

ASPBAE participated in the drafting committee which crafted the CSO statements that were read and presented during the APFSD 2016. ASPBAE contributed in particular to the sections on economic policies and employment, civil society role, and healthcare and education.



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The CSO statement underscored the point that *"health and education are the foundation upon which the three pillars of sustainable development goals are unified and must be grounded in the principles of social inclusion and equality."* The CSO Forum also agreed that, *"continued efforts are required for lifelong learning in both formal and non-formal setting with an emphasis on human rights, comprehensive sexuality education, gender equality, peace and security, and cultural diversity while addressing the needs of people with disability and special needs, and those who are socially excluded on the basis of age, race, caste or class, ethnicity, health status (including HIV and mental health status), ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, migrant status, social, economic or other status."*

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Several CSO advocacies were included in the final Outcomes Document of the Forum. The Forum also highlighted support for developing multi-stakeholder platforms to enhance participation and accountability in the monitoring and review of progress on achieving the SDGs.

Civil society presence and participation in the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was significant. Several of the CSO advocacies found their way in the final Outcomes Document of the forum, "[Report of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on its third session](#)".

The institutionalised participation of civil society in the regional SDG follow up mechanisms was reiterated in the report. Civil society assertions that the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda should adhere to human rights and include universal access to health and education, ending all forms of marginalisation and discrimination found strong reference in the final outcomes document. The Forum also

underscored support for developing multi-stakeholder platforms to enhance participation and accountability in the monitoring and review of progress on achieving the SDGs.

ASPBAE was represented in the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 and the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 by Executive Council member from East Asia, Batjargal Batkhuyag. ASPBAE Lead Policy Analyst, Rene Raya also attended the civil society forum.

Parts of this write-up have been drawn from the [UNESCAP](#) and [APRCM](#) websites.

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